

**Proposed Development of
73 social housing units at
Ardrew, Athy, Co. Kildare
Social Infrastructure Audit**

Kildare County Council

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an audit of the existing community facilities serving the Athy and the site of the subject Part 8 social housing development at Andrew. Social infrastructure Audits are carried out to ensure that new developments take account the existing social infrastructure and provide for new community services where required. These are facilities that will form elements to the key fabric of the area in terms of social, physical and mental well-being of the community.

The site of the development on Fortbarrington Road, Andrew is an undeveloped agricultural field, measuring circa 2.43ha, and the location is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The proposed development consists of 73 social housing units on this site, in a mixture of houses and apartments. The mix of units is:

- 54 no. houses (50 no. 2-storey and 4 no. bungalows, comprised of 4 no. 1-bed, 24 no. 2-bed, 20 no. 3-bed and 6 no. 4-bed) and
- 18 no. triplex apartments (3 storey comprised of 18 no. 1-bed) and
- 1 no 2-bed duplex apartment.

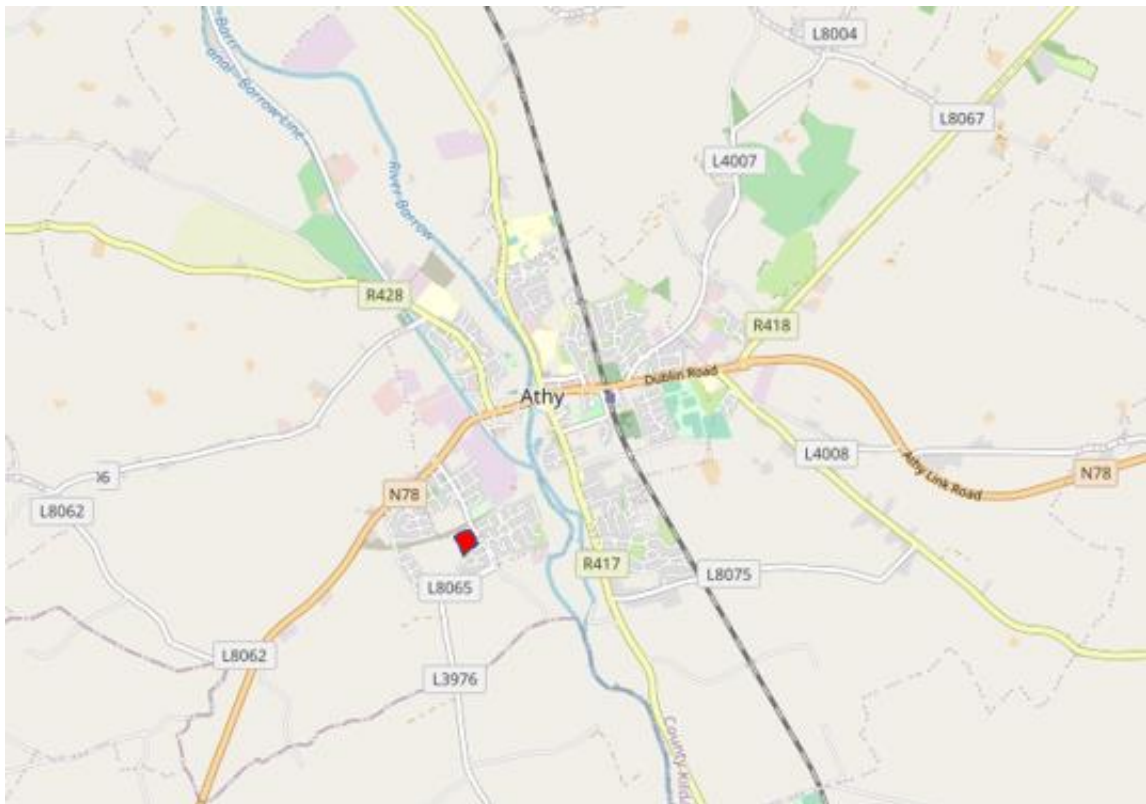


Figure 1: Location of subject site, Andrew, Athy, Co. Kildare

The proposed development cannot be looked at in isolation from the existent community that adjoins the site. It is necessary to account for the facilities and services accessibility within the administrative bounds of Kildare County Council.

It is essential that any new development constructed, integrates successfully into the existing community established. The development site is zoned as C13 “New Residential” in the Kildare County Development Plans – 2017 -2023 with a zoning objective as “To provide for new residential development”

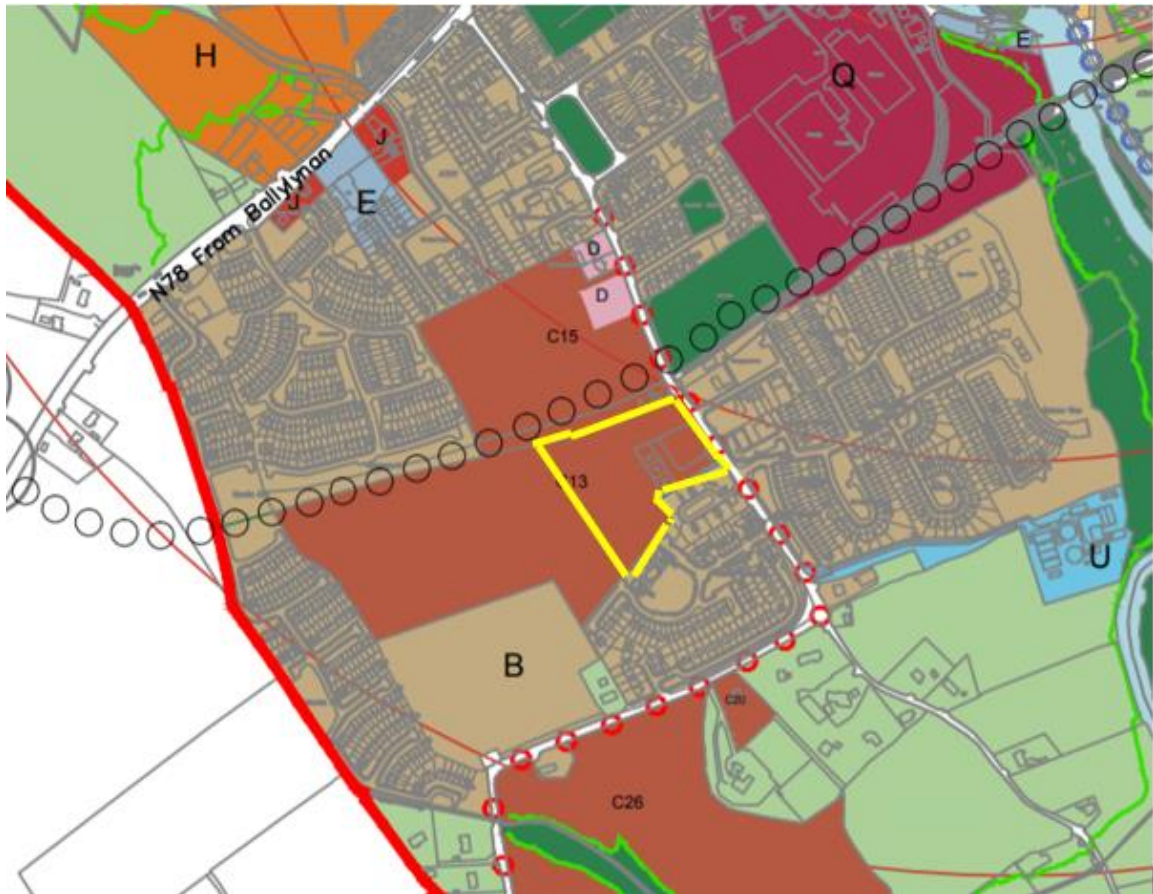


Figure 2: Site, outlined in yellow, at Andrew, Athy, zoned C13 “New residential” Kildare CDP 2017-2023

2 Area Context

2.1 General Area

The site is located on the south western the edge of the existing built urban form of Athy itself. The site consists of c.2.43ha of greenfield land as outlined in Figure 3. To the south of the site is a housing estate and a Traveller’s accommodation site. To the west of the subject site is agricultural fields. To the east of the site is bound by the Fortbarrington Road (L8990). Along the northern boundary is a narrow strip associated with appears to be a former railway line, and this is the location of a planned distributor road. To the north and east of the site are small residential housing estates, mainly semi-detached houses. There is also a local neighbourhood centre, known as Dún Brinn, that provides a creche, salon and convenience shop. This is located opposite the application site on the junction of Fortbarrington Road/ Bleach Road.



Figure 3: Site Outlined In Red

2.2 Transportation

2.2.1 Road

The site has limited transport connectivity due to the undeveloped, agricultural nature of its position, located on the south western outskirts of the town. The town’s main vehicular access road is the N78 National Secondary Route, that runs east / west, 800m north of the subject site.

The M9 Motorway connecting Dublin – Waterford, connects at junction 3, 10km east of the town. This is the closest access point to the national motorway network and is the nearest junction to serve Athy.

There is range of bus services that operate in Athy. The 130 and 130a routes are operated by Go-Ahead. These services provide connectivity to Kilcullen and Naas with onward connections to Dublin. Local Link provides Route 883 from Athy. This service provides four departures to Newbridge via Kildangan and Kildare Town each day. Local Link also provides one bus daily, Monday to Friday, from Athy to Castledermot, Moone and Timolin.

There are also private bus providers operating bus services. Route 825, operated by J.J Kavanagh & Sons travels from Abbeyleix to Carlow, via Portlaoise, Stradbally, Athy and Carlow IT, twice daily and the second route is also operated by J.J Kavanagh & Sons, Route 717 provides transport from Athy to Dublin Airport (via Naas), with three busses a day.

2.2.2 Rail

Athy train station, which is located east of the town centre, is serviced by two routes:

1. Dublin Heuston-Waterford
2. Waterford – Clonmel – Limerick Junction (Connections with Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway)

The Dublin Heuston-Waterford line connects the towns and cities of Waterford, Kilkenny and Carlow to Athy, Kildare, Newbridge, Sallins/Naas, Celbridge and Dublin on the Kildare Mainline. Currently, there are 9/10 services daily (Monday to Friday) towards both Dublin and Waterford. There are slightly fewer services on a Saturday and limited services on a Sunday. The Waterford – Clonmel – Limerick Junction only provides one train Monday – Saturday from Athy Station to both Dublin Heuston and Waterford.

3 Approach and Scope of the Report

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. It recognises the importance of quality of life and notes that how future development in Ireland is planned will continue to be a significant determinant of people’s quality of life.

National Policy Objective 33 seeks to “prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location”.

The National Planning Framework outlines the broad national objectives for residential development in the State. This high-level objective is filtered downwards to be integrated into the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES) prepared for the Eastern & Midland Region seeks to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region. Regarding the development of settlements such as Athy, this document places particular emphasis on town centre renewal and states “keeping a town vibrant and responsive to the needs of the community is an ongoing challenge and a greater range of supports need to be put in place to enable successful town centre renewal”. The RSES does not include any specific Regional Policy Objective (RPO) for Athy itself, but it is identified as a “key services centre” and is noted as a heritage walled town. Regarding the development of settlements such as Athy, this document, the RSES places particular emphasis on town centre renewal and states “*keeping a town vibrant and responsive to the needs of the community is an ongoing challenge and a greater range of supports need to be put in place to enable successful town centre renewal*”.

RPO 9.13, states “*to ensure that new social infrastructure facilities are accessible and inclusive for a range of users*” is a regional policy objective (RPO) within the RSES which supports the provision of, and access to social infrastructure in a town setting.

The County Development Plan sets out the strategic spatial context for the delivery of infrastructure in tandem with developments in County Kildare. It is reflective of higher-level policies namely the National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040 and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (ERMA RSES).

Athy at a county level as emphasised in Variation 1 of the Kildare County Council Development Plan 2017-2023, designates the town as a ‘Self-Sustaining Growth Town’. It defines this function as being able to “*provide a moderate level of jobs and services, which adequately caters for the people of its service catchment, has good transport links and a capacity for continued commensurate growth*”

The Core Strategy of the County Kildare Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (CDP) (as varied), Athy has been allocated 4.8% of the county’s overall housing growth. Applying this figure to the Athy LAP, the housing unit translates into a requirement for 771 additional units to be developed over the life of the Plan to 2027. These strategic level plans as outlined are designed to promote a sustainable community with residential development delivered in tandem with community facilities.

This Social Infrastructure Audit assesses a range of services and facilities that would be expected in a community, conducive to enabling a high-quality standard of living for the existing and future residents. This report will address key themes that constitute community facilities as outlined below. The themes will be analysed with regard to their context within the defined study area, with several varying buffer radii from the subject site.

- Open Space, Sport and Leisure
- Education
- Childcare Facilities
- Health Facilities and Social Services
- Community Facilities
- Transport Facilities
- Religious & Worship Facilities
- Retail & Entertainment

Community facilities and service will be examined in a series of varying buffers from the site. These buffers represent a realistic catchment and accessibility to services in the vicinity of the site, and that are available in the context of Athy town itself, and not solely with the immediate vicinity of the site.

A buffer of 1.5km radius of the subject site at Ardrew is used as a measure of distance from services. This is accepted as being the equivalent to 15 minute walk, which is seen as a reasonable limit that people will walk to avail and access a service.

To correctly assess the social infrastructure available in a small town, it is necessary to assess all facilities sited in the town, beyond the scope of 1.5km. A second buffer of 3km is used also, from the subject site in the context of Athy. The 3km buffer captures the extent of the built form of Athy from the subject site at Ardrew. This allowed data to be tabulated and considered in the context being that all amenities are accessible to future residents, and it would be incorrect to discount facilities and services beyond the 1.5km scope and would not give an accurate and realistic expectations of social infrastructure.

The below table outlines a range of services and facilities that would be expected to be reasonably accessible for residents. Some of the facilities will be reviewed in the context of Athy itself and its surrounding hinterland as the subject site is a greenfield, edge of urban settlement, and would be unlikely to capture all facilities and services given its location.

Facility	Description
Art & Culture	Art Galleries provide exhibition spaces, and may offer educational programs as well as meeting and workshop spaces for artists. Galleries are often co-located with libraries, Civic facilities and museums. A space for art, rehearsal and performance ranging from small playhouse to a large multipurpose performance centre supporting a wide range of performing arts. Includes arts workshop and music schools.
Community Centre /Halls	General community use facility providing meeting spaces, social, educational and recreational activities and / or health, support and information. Includes community centres, parish centres, local halls and meeting rooms.

Facility	Description
Leisure & Recreation Centre	Public indoor facility which caters for indoor sports (eg. Swimming pool, gym, sports) and other multipurpose rooms for pilates, yoga, meetings / classes.
Library	A library caters for a more localised area and offers access to both text and online resources for learning, and can also incorporate meeting spaces and areas for study.
Family Resource Centre	A family Resource Centre is a community centre specialising in the meeting the needs of young people and families. It can be funded under Tusla's Family Resource Programme to provide a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families. Centres can be accommodated within multipurpose facilities and can be shared with other similar organisations for youths. (Eg. Scouts)
Youth Facilities	These facilities include youth clubs, Scout dens and clubhouses. Facilities are often shared with other users and service providers.

Table 1: Categories of Community Facilities

4 Demographic Trends

Population modelling and demographics have been provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The latest census conducted in Ireland, Census 2016 recorded a population of 9,847 persons in Athy (within the Legal Town boundary) which represents a small increase of 2.7% (260 persons) in population from 2011 (9,587 persons). The legal town boundary consists of two electoral divisions, Athy West Urban and Athy East Urban.

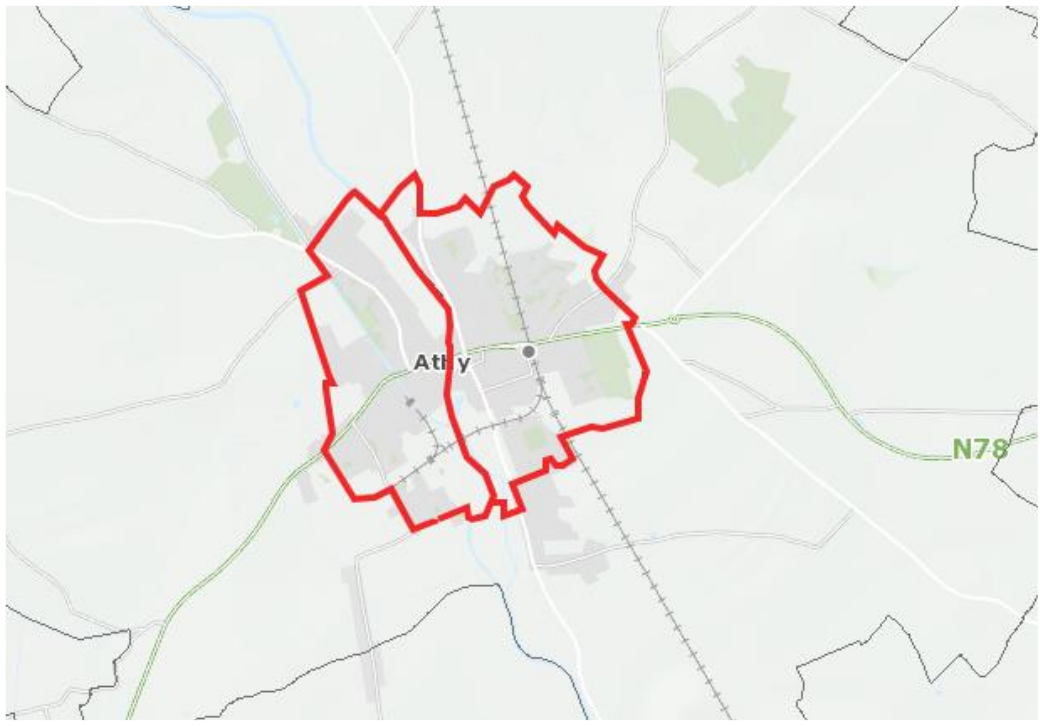


Figure 4 Athy West Urban and Athy East Urban, outlined in red.

It also recorded an increased growth in the number of children living in Athy. It is noted that the age profile of Athy includes a high percentage of children, young people and those at work. The 0-24 age group comprises 37.1% of the population which is noticeably higher than the national average of 33.2%. The below table illustrates the population demographic in Athy.

Age	Population	% of Total Population Athy	% at National Level
0-4	833	8.5%	7.0%
5-12	1,435	14.6%	11.5%
13-19	906	9.2%	9.0%
20-64	5,575	56.6%	59.1%
65+	1,098	11.1%	13.4%
Total	9,847	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2: 2016 Population by Age Group in Athy and Nationally (CSO)

5 General Benchmarking and Standards of Provision

There is no national set of guidelines that specifically outlines how to provide and manage the implementation of community infrastructure in existence. However, there are a number of statutory and non-statutory documents and guidelines setting out standards of provision of community and social infrastructure provision. Of particular relevance are the following sources of information and policies which guide the spatial development of the catchment:

1. The Kildare County Council Development Plan 2017 – 2023 has wide strategic objectives for the development of towns within the county and which are intended to guide development in the forthcoming years.
2. The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040 recognises that it is important that the community infrastructure should be considered in tandem to the population ensure that there is a sustainable level of provision. It proposes a hierarchy of social infrastructure, whereby specialist and high-quality functions such as hospitals are expected in larger settlements whereas small communities need to sustain strong community infrastructure such as a multi-purpose hall, primary school, post office, local shop or pub.
3. The Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009) state that no substantial residential development should take place without an assessment of existing school capacity. This view is echoed by the Department of Education who provide a code of practice on ‘The Provision of Schools in the Planning System’.
4. The Urban Design Manual states that there should be an emphasis on the provision of good urban design, open space and public plaza’s which can facilitate social interaction and provide opportunities that the provision of facilities alone may not.
5. The Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) support the provision of local retail units as they provide access to local facilities especially the elderly, persons with mobility impairments, families and those without access to private transport.
6. For new housing developments, Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001) recommends an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings.
7. The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities; the Department of Education and Science (renamed Department of Education and Skills) and the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government (renamed Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government) (2008) advised that 12 per cent of the population are expected to present for primary education. Based on this, plus an estimate of future growth, plus an assessment of the capacity of the existing primary and post primary schools in the area, the Department of Education will supply estimates to the local authority for the need for new schools or the extension of existing schools based on the requirements arising from new developments.
8. Under the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments* (Dec 2020), communal rooms may be provided in apartment schemes for the use of residents as meeting rooms or community rooms.

6 Existing Community Facilities

An audit was conducted for the existing social and community infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. For the purposes of this report, it is necessary to view distances from the site in differing contexts, dependent on the service itself. Given the scale and size of Athy itself and the location of the site to the south western edge of the town, it is necessary to extend boundaries and distance to encapsulate the entire built form of Athy. This gives a genuine and reasonable expectation regarding the review of existing community facilities.

6.1 Open Space, Sport and Leisure

Given the scale and the rural nature of the town of Athy. It is necessary to view the open space, sport and leisure facilities based on the town context, rather than solely a 1.5km / 15 minute walk boundary. Residents of the subject development may avail of any amenities available with the urban settlement of Athy itself.

To the southern side of the town is the Athy People's Park, just over 2km from the subject site at Church Road. The Athy People's Park is a 2 ha facility, consisting of a walled green space, with pathways and mature trees. There is a children's playground located within the Park and outdoor exercise equipment along many of the paths traversing the park.

Just to the north of the centre of Athy is Townspark. This is a large 15 ha open space that fronts to the western side of the river Barrow and is a dominant feature in the built environment of Athy. The park consists of open lands, with a range of facilities developed including a children's playground, a 5-a-side all-weather pitch/ basketball court and a soccer pitch. It is formed around the ruins of Athy Castle.

There is also large open space, that forms a linear corridor along the Barrow line canal. It is 9ha in area and lies approximately 1km to the east of the subject site. This is an attractive, waterside space, that dominates and separates the southern side of Athy. It consists of passive green spaces, between both the River Barrow and the Barrow Canal.

There is an extensive range of sporting clubs in Athy and their facilities provided.

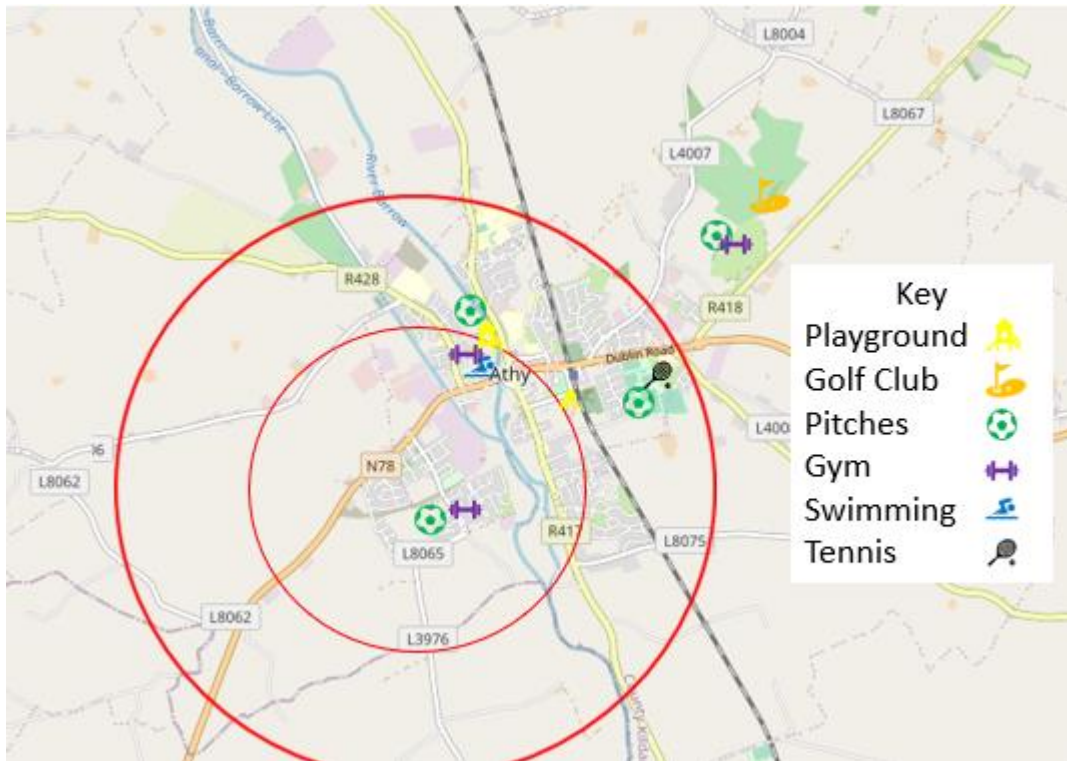


Figure 5. Sporting Facilities in Athy, Co. Kildare

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Name of Organisation	Description of facility	Address
Athy Rugby Club	Pitches and training pitches, 3 astro turf pitches, badminton courts and clubhouse.	The Showgrounds, Dublin Road, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy GAA Club	2 full size pitches, club house and general hall.	17 Dublin Road, Shamrocklodge, Athy Co. Kildare
Athy Golf Club	18 hole golf course and club house	Geraldine Road, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy Tennis Club	6 tennis courts and clubhouse.	Dublin Rd, Chanterlands, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy Town AFC (Soccer) Club	Clubhouse, indoor astro turf pitches/	Belan Road, Nicolastown, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy Skate Park		People's Park, Church Road, Athy, Co. Kildare
K Leisure Athy	Gym, Sauna, 25m swimming pool and astro-turf pitches.	Barrack Ln, Green Hills, Rathstewart, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy Rowing & Canoeing Club	Boathouse and lockers adjacent to the River Barrow.	Upper Saint Joseph's Terrace, Rathstewart, Athy, Co. Kildare
Karate Club	Unit/ warehouse facility.	Upper Saint Josephs Terrace, Rathstewart, Athy, Co. Kildare
Athy Wheeler's Cycling Club	Operating from a premises / office.	Emily Square, Athy
National Sports College	Gym and fitness studio	Fortbarrington Road, Athy,

Table 3: List of Leisure & Sports Clubs in Athy, Co. Kildare

6.2 Education

There are four primary schools serving the town of Athy. See Figure 6 below.

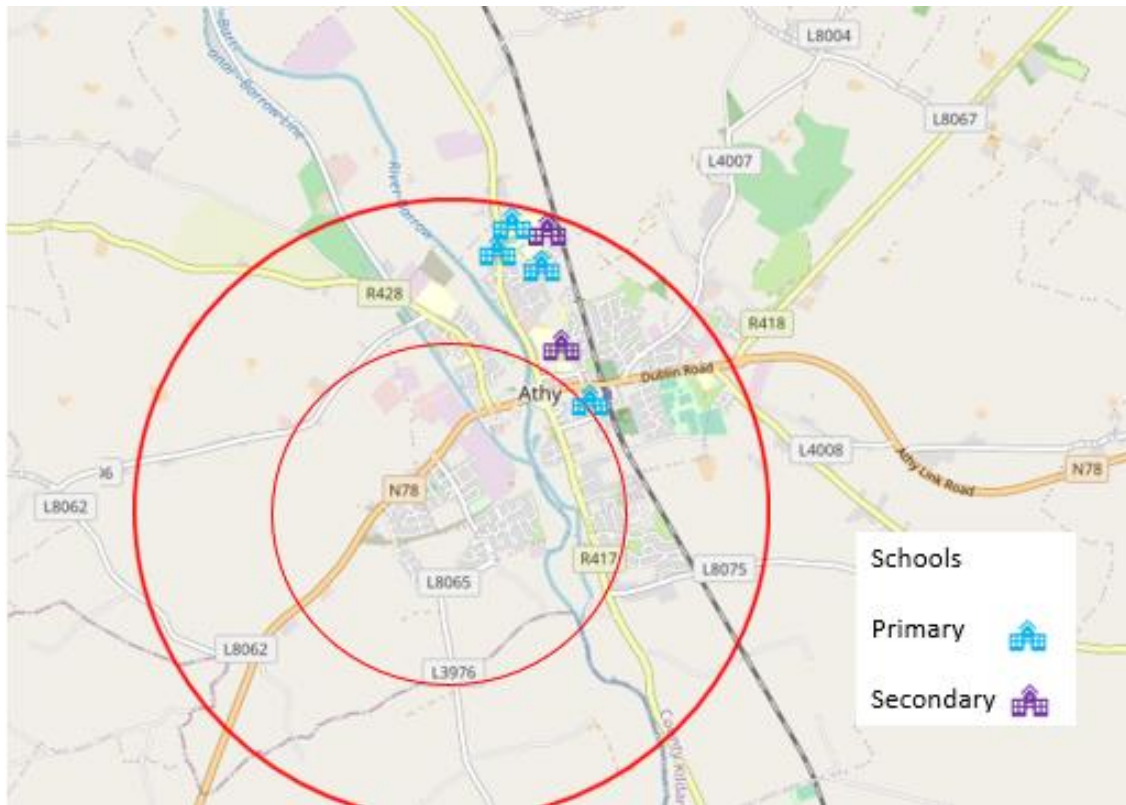


Figure 6: Location of Primary and Secondary Schools in Athy, Co. Kildare

The Department of Education outlines their current enrolments as per the 2019 – 2020 academic year. The population of a primary school aged children in the town is 2,341 between the ages, of 5-19, according to Census 2016. The distances from the listed schools to the subject site of the development are considerable, as the majority of school provision are either located in the centre of Athy, or the northern end of the town. The primary schools serving the town of Athy are listed in the table below. The distance is the measure from the subject site to the school.

School	Current Enrolment	Distance	Gender	Denomination
Athy Model School	97	3km	Mixed	Church of Ireland
Gaelscoil Atha Í	195	2.9km	Mixed	Non-Denominational
Scoil Mhichil Naofa	625	1.9km	Mixed	Catholic
Scoil Phádraig Naofa	622	3.1km	Mixed	Catholic

Table 4: Primary Schools in Athy, Co. Kildare

There are two secondary schools located within the town, serving the secondary school aged population of Athy. The schools are identified as being within the catchment area of the town. H Ard Scoil na Tríondade is located in the centre of Athy. Athy Community College, is a 3km

distance from the subject site at Ardrew. The school serves the residents' of Athy and a large rural hinterland surrounding it. Therefore in this context is not considered an unreasonable distance from the subject site. The enrolment numbers have been provided by the Department of Education for the 2020/2021 academic year.

School	Current Enrolment	Distance	Gender	Denomination
Athy Community College	428	3.1km	Mixed	Multi-Denomination
Ard Scoil na Trionade	856	1.8km	Mixed	Catholic

Table 5: List of Secondary Schools in Athy, Co. Kildare Childcare Facilities

6.3 Childcare

Consideration is given during the planning process to ensure there is an adequate supply of high quality, safe childcare alongside the provision of housing itself. It is seen as a prudent measure to ensure that there are local and easily accessible options for families in the vicinity of their homes. TUSLA is the State agency that oversees the provision of childcare and other family support services.

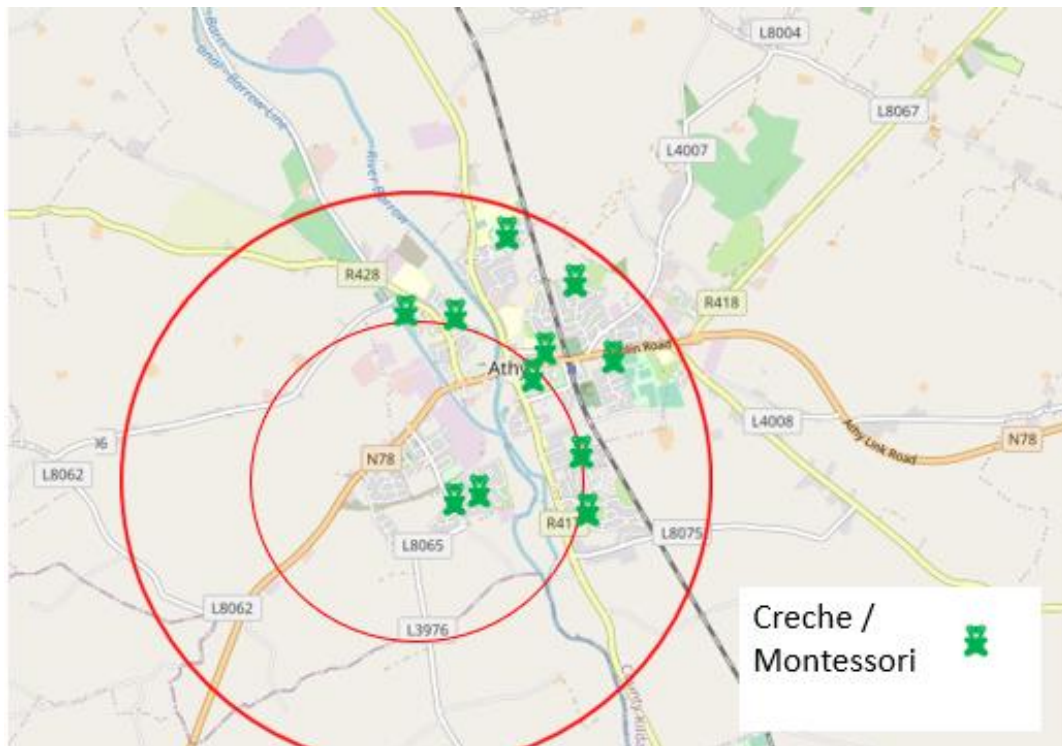


Figure 7 : Location of Creché / Montessori facilities in Athy, Co. Kildare.

Within 15 Minutes					
Name of Facility	Type of Service	No. Enrolled	Capacity	Available Spaces	Comment
Creative Kids	Sessional and Full Day	60	70	10	44 ECCE free preschool 22 full day care (overlap with ECCE) 4 rooms
*Manleys, Ardreigh Montessori & Childcare Centre	Full Day	35	35		
Shining Stars Academy	Full Day	80	80 Each session	20	Afternoon session availability
Aughraborta Pre-School	Sessional	9	11	2	
Shining Stars Homework	N/A	65	65	17	Adding 17 space to homework club
Within 20 Minutes					
Name of Facility	Type of Service	No. Enrolled	Capacity	Available Spaces	Comment
Tir Na Nog Early Years Care	Full Day	100	120	20	
Rainbow Kids Community	Sessional	No data	No data	No data	
Little Angels Childcare	Sessional	10	11	1	Free pre-school
Happy Days Community Childcare	Sessional	57	60	3	
Tiny Tots	Sessional	32	33	1	
Just for Kids	Full Day	35	37	2	

Table 6: Audit of Child Places

(Source: Kildare County Council Social Infrastructure Audit September 2020)

* Note: The consultants contacted the providers directly to confirm capacity for these facilities in July 2021. Figures are different from the Kildare CC SIA.

The table above clearly indicates the extensive list of childcare providers operating within the vicinity of the area.

The *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities* (2001) indicate that Development Plans should facilitate the provision of childcare facilities in appropriate locations. These include larger new housing estates where planning authorities should require the provision of a minimum of one childcare facility with 20 places for each 75 dwellings.

The *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines* for Planning Authorities nuances the childcare requirement by stating that: *'Notwithstanding the Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities (2001), in respect of which a review is to be progressed, and which recommend the provision of one child-care facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units, the threshold for provision of any such facilities in apartment schemes should be established having regard to the scale and unit mix of the proposed development'*.

6.4 Health Facilities and Social Services

There is one step down community hospital serving the town of Athy. St Vincent's Hospital, Woodstock St, 2.3km from the subject site. According to HIQA, (Health Information and Quality Authority), this is a 104 occupancy facility is for older persons, and does not operate general hospital care.

General services hospitals would have to be accessed in either Midland Regional Hospital in Portlaoise (23km west), Carlow District Hospital, in Carlow town (18km south) or Naas General Hospital, in Naas (35km north).

Primary Care services are broadly defined as the health or social care services that a person can use and find in a community, outside of a hospital setting. Primary Care includes GPs, Public Health Nurses and a range of other services provided through your Local Health Office, by the HSE (Health Service Executive).

Given the size of the town of Athy, there is a well-established network of health care facilities in existence to date. There are two large health centres operated by the HSE serving the town.

Facility	Address
Athy Health Centre	7 Woodstock St, Townparks, Athy
Athy Primary Care Centre	Dublin Road, Athy
Athy Lodge Medical	Athy Lodge, Athy, R14Ep84
Barrowview Medical Practice	Dublin Road, Athy
The Park Clinic	Gallowshill, Athy
Dr A.J. Reeves	Convent Lane, Athy
Dr Padraic Farrell	89 Woodstock Street, Athy

Table 7: List of Medical Centres and GPs in Athy, Co. Kildare

There is also several pharmacies and dentists operating from the town centre, concentrated on Duke Street and Leinster Street that serve the residents of Athy and it's hinterland.

6.5 Community Facilities

The town of Athy has an extensive network of community facilities established, that would be in line with a town of size and development. The majority of these community facilities are established on a town basis, and not solely catering to the townlands of Ardrew where the subject site is located. Social and Community facilities are varied in nature and can include general civic services and services targeted to specific sections of the community.

Family Resource Centres provide a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families and residents in communities. Family resource centres are operated by the TUSLA, the States, Child and Family Agency. There is a dedicated Family Resource Centre in Athy, operated by TUSLA. It offers an extensive range of services including but not limited to counselling services, family support, training schemes, youth support and senior services. This facility is located north of the town centre at Woodstock Street, 2.1km from the subject site.

Category	Type	Name	Address	Distance
Community	Community Centre	Athy Recreational Community Hall (ARCH Athy)	Kilkenny Road, Athy	900m
Community	Community Centre	Athy Community Arts Centre	Woodstock Street, Athy	1.3km
Community	Men's Shed	Athy Community Men's Shed	Unit 9, Community Enterprise Centre, Athy	1.3km
Community	Community Centre	Mount Saint Mary's Community Resource Centre	Mount St. Mary's, Athy	1.8km
Community	Public Service	Athy Garda Station	Green Alley, Athy	1.4km
Community	Public Service	Athy Fire Station	Townsparks, Athy	1.9km
Community	Support	Athy Citizens Information Centre	Emily Row, Offaly St, Athy	1.7km
Community	Public Service	Athy Library	Convent Lane, Athy	1.5km
Community	Community Hall	Scouts Hall – Beaver Scouts & Cub scouts	St John's Lane, Athy	1.3km

Category	Type	Name	Address	Distance
Community	Public Service	Athy Municipal District Office (Kildare County Council)	Stanhope St, Athy	1.7km
Community	Community Hall	St Michael’s Veteran’s Centre	38 Duke St.	1.3km
Community	Public Service	An Post, Post Office	Duke St.	1.3km
Community	Heritage	Athy Heritage Centre – Shackleton Museum	Athy Town Hall, Emily Square, Athy	1.6km

Table 8. List of community facilities in Athy, Co. Kildare

6.6 Religious & Worship Facilities

There are several churches and religious buildings serving a variety of different faiths in Athy. These places of worship are located within the core of the town, and are within walking distance of the site in Ardrew, catering to the various Christian religious denominations and for other religions in the community.

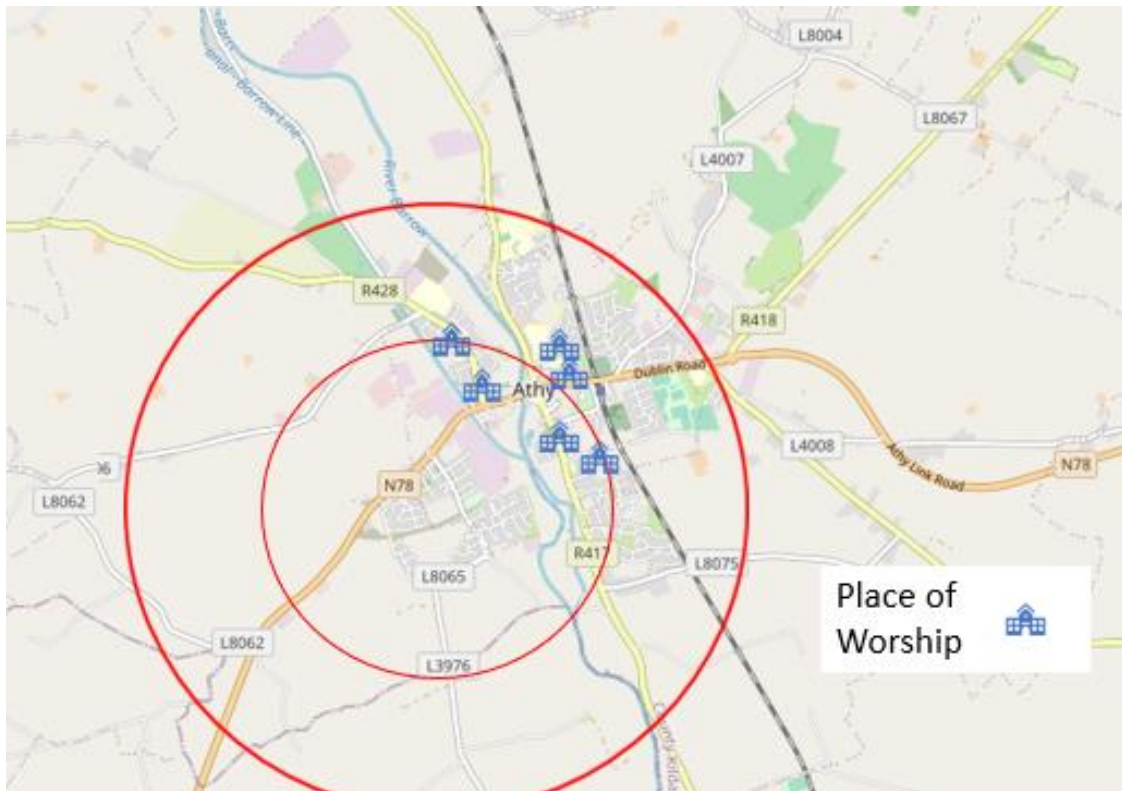


Figure 8: Places of Worship, Athy, Co. Kildare

The below table outlines the facility and the respective distance from the subject site.

Name	Address	Distance
St Michael's Church (Catholic)	Monsterevin Road, Athy	2.2km
St Michael's Church (Church of Ireland)	Carlow Road, Athy	2.2km
Methodist Church	Woodstock St, Athy	1.6km
Presbyterian Church	Dublin Road, Athy	2.6km
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses	Flinter's Place, Townparks, Athy	2.3km
Kingdom Life Church	3 Kirwans Lane	2.3km

Table 9: List of Places of Worship in Athy, Co. Kildare

6.7 Retail & Entertainment

Directly opposite the subject site at Ardrew is the Dún Brinn Neighbourhood Centre, located at the junction of Fortbarrington Road and Bleach Roads. Here, there is an XL convenience shop, a hairdressers, and a beauty salon serving the immediate needs of local residents.

The close distance of the town centre and the general requirement of critical mass allows for a wide range of retail facilities, banking services, entertainment options to form around the core of the town.

7 Audit

This Social Infrastructure Audit existing gaps in provision of community infrastructure facilities for the Athy area for the following categories

- Open Space, Sport and Leisure
- Education
- Childcare Facilities
- Health Facilities and Social Services
- Community Facilities
- Transport Facilities
- Retail & Entertainment

The proposed development is expected to have a minor increase the population, however it is not deemed to have a detrimental impact of service provision and facilities. The subject site of this development is in a location that has reasonable access of less than 1.5km from the town's extensive array of services and facilities.

7.1 Open Space, Sport and Leisure

The subject site at Ardrew, Athy is near to many of the existing open spaces in the town itself and would satisfy and open space / green space needs required by residents. The first significant open space area in Athy, is the Townsparks area. This forms the principle green space within the town. Townsparks is 15ha of open parkland with an array of leisure facilities and pursuits catering to the local's needs. It is fronted to the nearby River Barrow and to the canal, offering access to water sports and other activities.

The People's Park, on Church Road, provides a walled garden of 2ha of green space, with a children's playground and several installations of outdoor gym equipment for public use.

In addition to the two main parks there are paths along the banks of the River Barrow and the Barrow Line Canal providing a high-level public amenity. It is noted that the majority of open space in Athy is provided in the form of green space within residential estates.

There numerous sports facilities and clubs operating in Athy, and most are identified within a 3.0km of the site, all of which are accessible on foot or cycle. It is therefore not considered that the proposed development justifies the provision of additional facilities open space or leisure facilities.

The findings of the SIA highlighted that open space standards are currently exceeded having regard to the existing population of Athy. Whilst all standards decrease with the anticipated population increase, open space provision remains within acceptable standards except, in the provision of playspace. This means that if the population of Athy is to increase an approximate additional 2,160 persons under the projections of the Local Area Plan, 2.514 hectares of playspace area will be required to serve the community within existing and proposed green spaces.

There is a proposed development of open spaces with playing pitches and a multipurpose hall to the immediate west of the subject site. This open space is being stipulated by Kildare County Council, as part of the next draft Athy Local Area Plan to address the shortfall in play spaces.

7.2 Education

There is no specific population benchmark for the provision of primary or secondary school facilities in Ireland. The Department of Education and Science's approach includes a general standard that for every 1,000 dwellings in an area, circa 12% of the population will require primary school places and 8.5% will require post primary school places. The Department of Education and Science uses the assumption that 11.3 % of the population are of primary school-going age. Census 2016 indicates that within the study boundary there are 1,435 children of primary school going age residing in the town. In Athy 14.6% of the population within the study area are eligible for primary school places and 9.2% for secondary school places. Both metrics indicate the young demographic population of the town, is above the national norm. This demographic profile will give rise to a demand for school places in Athy.

The number of primary school age children expected to be residing in this development would be 19 children, based on average household size of 2.65 and the number of family sized homes to be constructed (49 units). The Department of Education's guidelines require a 1:25 teacher student ratio. Applying this ratio would result in a demand which is short of an additional classroom. The LAP Social Infrastructure Audit indicates that an additional 10 classrooms comprising 26 pupils each would be required for Athy over the lifetime of the Plan. These could be provided within existing schools if there is capacity to expand or through the provision of new school(s) located near existing residential areas or proposed new residential development(s). The council will liaise with the DoES regarding future provision in terms of location and size preferences.

The development would give rise to 12 children of secondary school going age. The LAP social infrastructure audit indicates that secondary schools are at, or exceeding capacity and that further expansion is required. It is noted Athy Community College has secured funding from the Department of Education for an extension to take the capacity to 1,000 students or 560 additional school places, but a planning application has not yet been submitted.

7.3 Childcare Facilities

The Kildare Council Childcare Committee (KCCC) were consulted and their letter of the 6th June 2021 is attached as Appendix I of this report. The letter refers to *Needs Analysis of Early Years Childcare in County Kildare*, which was carried out in 2017/2018. The report states "Areas considered to be reasonably well serviced were Naas and Athy, although services for children aged under two were considered lacking in the latter and inadequate in Naas." 38% of parents indicated no difficulty in accessing childcare in Athy, compared to a County average of 14%. There was no specific capacity assessment undertaken of facilities as part of this survey. The letter indicates that as of June 2021 there were 345 children attending for ECCE (pre-school) in services in Athy. There were 129 registered in services under the National Childcare Scheme and 144 under 'legacy' childcare schemes CETS and CCSP. It was noted that COVID-19 makes it difficult to assess demands over the next year. KCCC did not have data on the number of children availing of private daycare places, although this information was collected in 2020 as part of the Social Infrastructure Audit for the LAP (refer to section 6.3 above). The submission indicates that "The numbers requiring places in the coming years can be projected/ extrapolated somewhat using birth figures from the CSO." This is done below.

Census 2016 shows that 833 children are eligible for childcare (under school going age i.e. 0-4 years inclusive). There are 11 childcare providers in operation with the area of Athy, catering to 575 childcare spaces. This would indicate approximately 69% of children eligible for childcare in Athy avail of such services.

The provision of 73 units on this site at Ardrew fall below the mandatory threshold set out by the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001). The development is not of such scale that it would require the construction of a childcare facility and should absorb any potential demand for childcare spaces.

Census 2016 recorded a population of 9,847 persons in the defined Legal Town of Athy, with 3,709 families are recorded. This is equivalent to 2.65 persons per family. This would result in a population for the proposed development of 193 for the proposed development. The Apartment Guidelines indicate that 1-bedroom units may be removed from the calculation of the requirement. A total of 24 no. 1 bedroom units are proposed. On this basis, 51 units would generate a demand for childcare places.

The 2016 Census Report data has determined that the average family contains 1.38 children (persons aged 18 and under) of which 30 per cent are children aged between 0-4 years old. The proposed development would therefore, theoretically in accordance with current rates of population, yield 70 no. children of which 21 no. would be between the 0 and 4 years of age, that is within the creche requirement age. The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) carried out by the Central Statistics Office includes data on childcare. The last available report the Q4 2016 published in July 2017 indicates that 19% of pre-school age children (0-4) attend a childcare facility (creche, Montessori, group, aftercare school facility). In the event that this is applied, the development would only result in a demand for **4** childcare places.

However, for the purposes of this assessment, the provisions of the Childcare Guidelines are adopted and effectively form the worst-case scenario. They indicate that 20 spaces are required for every 75 dwelling units, or a rate of 0.26 per unit. This would equate to **13** childcare spaces for the 51 units generating a demand.

It has been confirmed that there is spare capacity of 10 places in the Creative Kids creche opposite the site at Ardrew Square. In effect the capacity is in excess of this owing as there is further sessional capacity after 12.30pm and after school times. There is a further 22 sessional places available at Shining Stars Academy and Aughraboura Pre-School within the 15-minute walk isochrone of the site.

Planning for community infrastructure is undertaken as part of the local area plan or development plan process and this has been undertaken as part of preparation of the Draft Athy LAP.

The proposal is for 73 units, which falls below the threshold for a creche. Only 51 units would give rise to a demand for childcare. There is currently spare capacity in the creche at Ardrew Square, which is located just to the east of the site and further capacity at other creches within 15 minutes. There is no specific requirement for a creche.

7.4 Health Facilities

There are no published standards to facilitate assessment or adequacy of need. However, the Primary Care Strategy, issued by the Department of Health and Children in 2001, provides some

form of guidance regarding the implantation of Primary Care Centres and their staffing. The starting point for service delivery in the sector is the Primary Care Team (PCT) consisting of general practice, public health nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. These teams support populations of around 7,000 to 10,000 people and operate alongside wider community network services that include oral health services, audiology, dietetics, ophthalmology, podiatry, and psychology services. The population of the town of 9,847 persons, and the listed services available would indicate that there is sufficient health care facilities and capacity available for future residents.

7.5 Community Facilities

There is a range of community facilities in Athy and within walking distance of the site. However, in accordance with the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, developers may consider the inclusion of community spaces as part of apartment developments. Furthermore, the Athy Local Area Plan places an emphasis on the delivery of social infrastructure to support existing and new communities (Policy HC3 of the LAP). Although, the proposed development does not strictly include apartments, consideration may be given to the provision of such facilities to serve the exclusively the needs of the prospective residents. This would contribute to reduction in car traffic movements in and out of the site and contribute to fostering social cohesion and community building.

7.6 Religious Worship

There are several places of worship in Athy, covering a wide range of different Christian denominations in the town. There is no standard measure in place regarding the provision of religious places of worship and their capacity restraints. The below map identifies the location of the places of worships, majority concentrated in the town core and accessible from the service site.

7.7 Retail & Entertainment

The close distance to the town centre and its array of retail and entertainment options provides a critical mass required to sustain commercial enterprises. There is no standard in place regarding the number of people required to sustain these services. Demands are derived from catchment, retail expenditure available within the catchment and other competing centres. The location of a neighbourhood centre, directly across from the subject site, offers a range of local services, from hairdressing to a convenience shop. The inclusion of additional retail would not be deemed necessary as it would comprise and undermine the existing provisions offered in the area.

8 Conclusion

Social and community infrastructure is essential to achieving a balanced approach to sustainable local communities and it is of critical importance to the economic as wellbeing and social development of a town such as Athy. The Social Infrastructure Audit has identified certain specific requirements for the future provision of community infrastructure facilities for Athy.

The proposed development will generate an added demand on the existing services and facilities, such open space, leisure. However with the proposed play pitches and multi purpose hall being developed to the immediate west of the site, accessed from the proposed development will address this current imbalance of provision. The proposed development includes a community room which will serve the needs of the prospective residents of the development. It will contribute to meeting the needs of future residents.

There is also sufficient capacity with regard to retail and entertainment provision, especially given the access to the neighbourhood centre at Dún Brinn, immediately adjacent to the site. The proposed development will strengthen the commercial viability of retail services at Dún Brinn by increasing footfall in the vicinity of the area.

The development will give rise to a limited increase in demand for childcare. There is currently adequate capacity within the town's facilities to cater for the additional demand arising from the development.

Appendix I- Kildare County Childcare Committee Letter

Promoting quality and accessible childcare provision for all children from birth to 14 years in Co. Kildare in partnership with all stakeholders.



03.06.2021

To whom it may concern,

Kildare County Childcare Committee (KCCC) was established in 2001. Our mission is “Promoting quality and accessible childcare provision for all children from birth to 14 years in Co. Kildare in partnership with all stakeholders.”

As of June 2021 there were 345 children attending for ECCE (pre-school) in services in Athy. There were 129 registered in services under the National Childcare Scheme and 144 under ‘legacy’ childcare schemes CETS and CCSP. We do not have data on the number of children availing of private daycare places. Children are now entitled to 2 free ECCE (pre-school years) before school– every child living in the town will require a place for 2 years (from 3-5 years approx.), with the exception of a small number who attend elsewhere. The numbers requiring places in the coming years can be projected/ extrapolated somewhat using birth figures from the CSO.

Please note that circumstances have changed significantly due to the current Covid situation, it is difficult to know how much capacity services will have in the coming year.

We conducted a Needs Analysis in 2017/18, the results of which confirmed that there is great demand for baby childcare places (see <https://www.kccc.ie/Portals/0/KCCC%20Childcare%20Needs%20Analysis%20FINAL.pdf>). After-school places were also a pressure area, with lots of demand. There is a need for more community-run childcare services in the county.

KCCC support the inclusion of appropriate childcare facilities in planning applications and also the inclusion of natural outdoor play spaces for children of all ages. Regarding design factors, it is essential that any designs for future creche/ childcare facilities take account of the Universal Design Guidelines, see <https://aim.gov.ie/universal-design-guidelines-for-elc-settings/>.

Yours Sincerely

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